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MINNESOTA COUNTRY

1. The Grain

Glowing, coppery, whispering grain,
Over the slopes and over the plain,
Bowing and rising and bowing again.

Sibilant shimmering secret and slight,
Mystical swaying in silvery light;
Ghosts of the grainfields, astir in the night!

2. The House in the Prairie

The battered house in the middle of town
Lonely and sullen and dingy and brown,
Shakes to the drays as they pass up and down.

Once Indians sat on the kitchen floor,
And brought wild ducks for the winter store;
The boundles prairie swept to the door!

Leisa Wilson, 1921.

"THE LORD IS POLITE"

(Chapel at Vassar is not held on rainy evenings).

The Lord is polite—
Just look at that rain!
There's no chapel tonight;
The Lord is polite.
What heavenly sight
Is that wet window pane!
The Lord is polite—
Just look at that rain!

Mary Lapsley Caughey, 1921.

A SPRAY OF MILKWEED

You three gaping, pale-green pods,
So filled with silver-silken treasure
That you burst,
What fairy wove
The tiny gossamer shrouds
Which take your brown seeds
To their burial?

Elisabeth Link, 1922.

THE DANCE

At the beginning,
Silence.
The Silence of endles blue—
The Silence of air,
Of Unity—
Of nothing old
And nothing new . . .
Only the waiting
Of Silence.

Then a sound comes out of the Silence
And the dance of the feet of men . . .
Music that plays in the heart of the earth
Beating the rhythm of death . . . of birth . . .
(The shimmer of sun on the grass)
The singing of birds, and the wind in the trees,
Waterfalls . . . and working bees . . .
(Whispers of hours that always pass)
. . . Work . . . and the cries of men.

And when the leaves turn it will rain
And there will be no thirst . . . no pain . . .
Only Silence again.

Out of the music
Comes Silence
Again.
The Silence of watching eyes—
The Silence of thought
Of Beauty—
Of dying youth
And unheard sighs . . .
The beginning
Of Silence
Again.

Hannah Sasse, 1921.

TO A CHILD

All Hallowe'en

When witches weird on broomsticks ride,
And Jack-o-lanterns glare
From every corner, scaresome-like,
At him who passes there,
When grinning goblins haunt the woods,
And chalky ghosts are seen—
I think it's just a masquerade:
The fairies' Hallowe'en!

Maloise Sturdevant Dixon, 1923.

I HAVE KISSED BEAUTY

I have kissed Beauty.
Beneath the stars, upon a little hill
She offered me her lips . . .

I have kissed Beauty . . .
The night came near, and seeing overmuch
Must be forever still,
Hushed by the touch
Of Beauty's fingertips.

Hannah Sasse, 1921.

HARLEQUINO'S SONG

Columbine, Columbine, throw me a rose-bud,
Give me a kiss from your rose-red lips.
Columbine, Columbine, flowers are opening.
See where the bee in deep happiness sips.

Even as he sips from the flowers, half-open,
So would my spirit sip yours, Columbine,
Drinking your beauty but newly blossomed,
Holding you close to me, making you mine.

Columbine, Columbine, throw me a rose-but,
Give me a sign that you love me, I pray.
See! She has thrown me two great lovely roses.
I wager I'll have her a week from today.

COLUMBINE'S THOUGHTS

Harlequin has lovely eyes
And he seems so very wise,
Yet he bows him at my feet,
Finds my maiden kisses sweet.
All this goes to prove, I'm sure,
Men admire us demure;
Like us simple, good, and kind.
I please Harlequino's mind.
He declares he can't exist
Without kissing my small wrist.
So I think I'll give him me,
All I have shall be quite free.
He shall have me for a prize,
Harlequin with lovely eyes.

Mary Lapsley Caughey, 1921.

ISEULT AMONG THE LEPERS

Beat—beat—beat—beat—
Rhythm of the stumps that once were feet,
Clapping of the stumps that once were hands—
Round and round and round and round,
Whirling, twirling, falling to the ground,
Maddened with the motion, shrieking, chanting,
"Hail, all hail to the King's commands—
Come and snatch Sir Tristram's treasure,
Come, ye lepers, take your pleasure!"
Mocking, mowing, hot and panting,
Shiny, white, plague-eaten faces,
Ghastly forms, unclean, unclean—
Wild with lust for my embraces,
Lust for me, Iseult the Queen.
Help! No help—I am alone—
Tristram! Nay, but he is dead—
Little hungry flames have fed
On the heart that was my own.
Love and death the prophecy—
Oh, it would be sweet to die,
Passion's first-fruits, he and I—
Such a death were ecstacy!
Death is such a little thing—
Poisoned cup or thrust of sword,
Tongue of flame or grip of cord—
Such a trifle to a King.
Yet for an unfaithful wife
Even though she be a queen
'Tis a gift too dear, I ween,
So my punishment is life.
And to be their ghastly joy,
Sport of all the leper band,
Passed from hand to rotting hand,

AUTUMN QUIET

Gently the dead leaves quiver from the trees,
  With but a sigh to linger in their wake.
Soundless the rain sifts down the quiet breeze
  And breaks the calm within the marsh-bound lake
In darkening circles, shifting, mingled, lost.
  The air is quick and sentient with regret,
Wraiths of warm wine from Youth's cup flower-embossed
  Whose drop is spent before our lips are wet.

Once summer sunlight in a woodland glade
  Flecked in gay pattern all the slopes moss-grown,
Bright glints of amber pierced the flickering shade,
  And there we lingered till the last light shone
Across the hills.—Now through the damp still air
  Come only memories and dull despair.

Marjorie S. Ward, 1921.

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